

have laid eggs more than once. However, the inter-nesting period is not known. The laying of eggs collectively by several females in the same site could be due to the scarcity of suitable sites. It appears that these sites have some specific microclimate such as temperature. Preliminary observations show that these sites have higher temperature than the general atmosphere. Warmer nest conditions may help faster embryonic development and hatching. Communal nesting (Smith 1935) in a suitable site is not uncommon in geckoes. Thirty eggs of *Hemidactylus frenatus* have been found in a wooden box embedded in the wall (Bhupathy, unpublished data). Many females of the endemic and endangered golden gecko, *Calodactylodes aureus* also deposit eggs collectively, and the number of eggs may exceed 40 at each site (Daniel, J.C. pers. comm.). Smith (1935) reported the largest number of 186 eggs in a nest of *Gekko japonicus*, perhaps an instance of communal egg laying.

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S. BHUPATHY
A.M.A. NIXON
*Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology
and Natural History,
P.O. Anaikatti,
Coimbatore 641 108,
Tamil Nadu,
India.*

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28. RANGE EXTENSION OF *RANA MALABARICA* (BIBR.) IN MADHYA PRADESH

One night in August 1999, while driving back to my camp (Wild Chalet, Mocha village), in the buffer zone of Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh, I stopped to watch a frog crossing the road. It looked like an interesting species, but I was unable to get down immediately as it was raining. Since I had seen similar frogs earlier in South West India, it did not take me long to identify it as the fungoid frog *Rana malabarica* (Bibr.). I never knew that this frog existed as far north as Mandla district in Madhya Pradesh, and after my first sighting, I kept a lookout for it to photograph and confirm my identification. I did not see that species during that season, but I instructed my local assistants to keep a lookout.

In May 2000, after a couple of pre-monsoon showers, a friend informed me that he had seen a number of colourful frogs in a newly dug well in the village of Mocha. I asked him to procure a specimen immediately, which he did. The live frog in a bottle confirmed the existence of *Rana malabarica* around Kanha. I kept the frog for about 24 hours and released it after photographing it. I went around the village trying to gather more information about this species, and saw some individuals in two or three wells (in May and June) sitting on the sides above the water. I never saw them actually living in water and I support the earlier observations on habits (Daniel 1975).

The occurrence of *Rana malabarica* observed in and around Kanha is an extension of its range. It was reported earlier from Jagdalpur in Bastar district (Daniel and Selukar 1964) now in Chattisgarh, about 350 km southeast of Kanha. The present report from Kanha in the Satpuras (Maikal Range) definitely strengthens the view that the species has a much wider distribution in the Peninsula. However, around Kanha, it is definitely not a common species, as it appears only during two or three months of the year, unlike in southwest India and also perhaps in Bastar, where it is stated to be not uncommon (Daniel and Selukar 1964).

Essentially a forest dweller, *Rana malabarica* seems to prefer moist-deciduous biotopes to dry deciduous tracts and perhaps this explains why it is absent (?) between the Kasara Ghat (Maharashtra) and Eastern Satpura trend of hills with sal forests. Having been reported from Bastar already, the species may very well occur in the Eastern Ghats.

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E.P. ERIC D'CUNHA
P.O. Kisli 481 768,
District Mandla,
Madhya Pradesh,
India.

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29. A NOTE ON *MESONOEMACHEILUS HERREI* NALBANT AND BANARESCU
(CYPRINIFORMES: BALITORIDAE: NOEMACHEILINAE)

(With one plate)

Mesonoemacheilus herrei described by Nalbant and Banarescu (in Asket Singh *et al.* 1981) was based on collections made from Puthutotam Estate, Valparai in Anamalai Hills by Herre in 1941, and identified as belonging to the species *guentheri*. Nalbant and Banarescu distinguished *herrei* from *guentheri* (described by Day from Nilgiri Hills), based on several characters, including differences in colour pattern and structure of scales (white spots on body being more roundish and regularly disposed in *guentheri* vs. white coloration 'V' or 'Y'-shaped in *herrei*; scales with reduced and eccentric focal zone in the former vs. a central and much larger focal zone in the latter).

Menon (1987), in his revisionary study of the Noemacheilids, treated *herrei* as a synonym of *guentheri*. However, Jayaram (1999), following Banarescu and Nalbant (1995), retained it as a separate species. No specimens

of *herrei* were reported subsequent to its original description. Silas (1951), in his paper on the fishes of Anamalai and Nelliampathi Hill ranges, reported collection of *Noemacheilus triangularis* from the streams draining the Ponnani drainage system in the Nelliampathi Hills. *N. herrei*, especially the juveniles, superficially resemble both *guentheri* and *triangularis*, and the specimens named *triangularis* by Silas (op. cit.) could possibly be *herrei*, described subsequently by Nalbant and Banarescu. More recently, six survey teams of the Zoological Survey of India (1996-1998) collected three species of *Noemacheilus* from the Anamalais, namely *denisoni*, *herrei* and *monilis*.

A total of 27 specimens of *herrei*, ranging in length from 20.5-52 mm SL were collected from two localities and Kolikamuthi at altitudes 890 m and 870 m respectively. *M. herrei* (Plate 1, Fig.1) is reported here, and an attempt is made